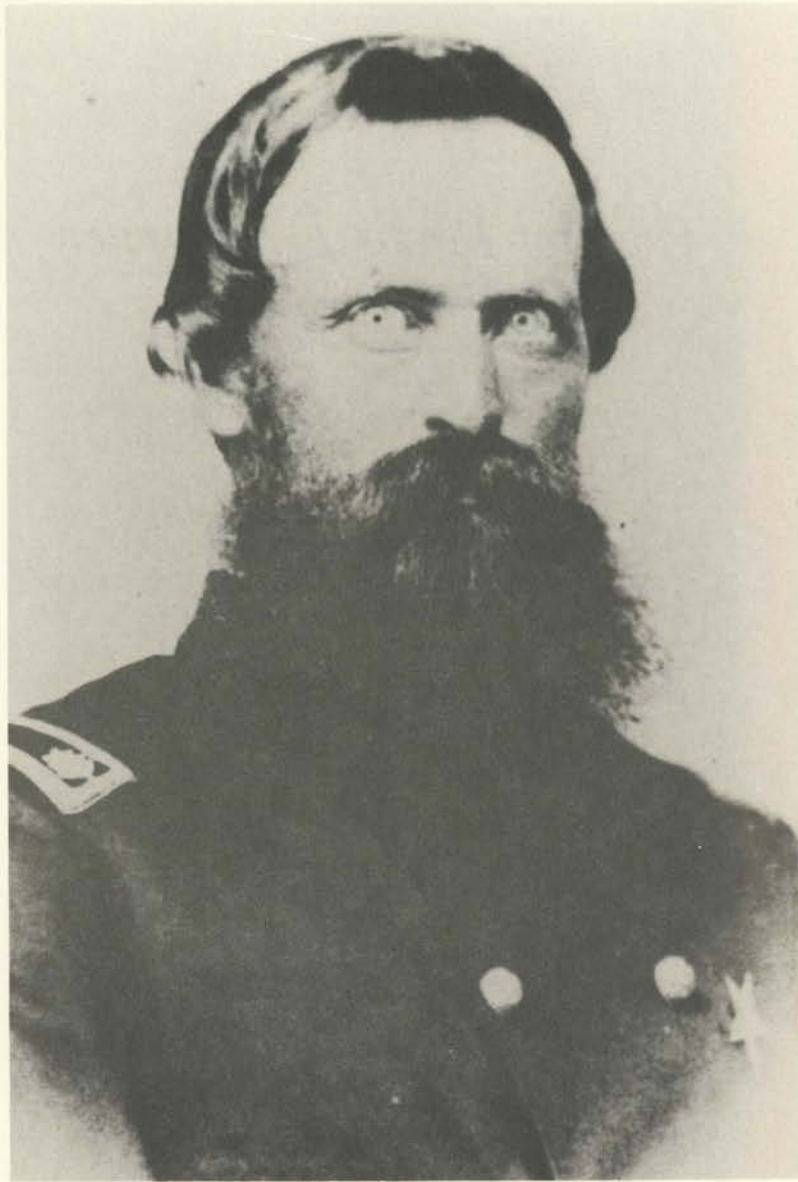


Colonel Lewis D. Warner

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*Colonel Lewis D. Warner, 154th New York Volunteers. (PHOTOGRAPH
COURTESY OF WILLIAM C. WELCH, ALLEGANY, N.Y.)*

Colonel Lewis D. Warner

AN APPRECIATION

WRITTEN FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF
COL. L.D. WARNER DAY

AND THE
5TH ANNUAL REUNION OF
DESCENDANTS OF THE
154TH NEW YORK VOLUNTEERS

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THE war was over, and the soldiers of the 154th Regiment, New York State Volunteer Infantry, were gathered before their commander, listening to him bid them farewell. Lieutenant Colonel Lewis D. Warner commended the men for their patriotic motives in serving the Union cause and for the part they had played in crushing the Rebellion. He joined them in pleasantly anticipating the return to loved ones at home and their release from annoying military discipline.

The colonel noted the price the regiment had paid during three years of war. "Entering the field near a thousand strong," he recalled, "we return with little more than one-third that number." The 154th New York had suffered heavy battlefield losses of killed, wounded and captured, and of the latter a substantial number had died in Confederate prisons. Still more men had died of disease or had been discharged, suffering from crippling wounds or shattered health.

And yet, although the regiment had experienced in full the horrors of war, Colonel Warner declared, "I do not believe there is one now within the sound of my voice who regrets that he became a *Soldier Boy*." Of his own role as commander of the 154th, he stated simply, "I have ever endeavored to do my duty, and have been governed by what appeared to me to be the best interests of the Regiment and service." Reflecting on his service with the regiment, the colonel vowed, "I would not exchange my three years' connection with this little band for all the rest of my life together; for I feel that, in after years, I can look upon these as of more value than them all."

Like the other men of his generation who had fought in the Civil War, Lewis D. Warner had undergone an experience that would define him for the rest of his life. As terrible as the war had been, the soldiers sensed they were leaving behind something irreplaceable. They had been bound tightly together by the triumphs, defeats, agonies, drudgeries and camaraderie they had shared. As the years passed, the veterans would look back to the stirring days of the war with ever more selective memories, choosing to recall comradeship rather than carnage, and devotion instead of devastation.

In 1888, twenty-three years after Colonel Warner told them goodbye, the surviving veterans of the 154th New York held their first reunion. The main oration was delivered by Alfred W. Benson, a former captain of the regiment, who during his lengthy address mentioned only one member of the 154th by name: "our respected and much loved Col. Warner." Another former officer testified to the colonel's courage: "You all know he was the bravest of the brave. Did he ever say to the regiment 'let us go there' unless they always got there?" The heartfelt feelings of the regiment for its commander, forged in camp, on the march and in battle, never faded away.

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During the war, Lewis Dennis Warner filled out a questionnaire for New York State's Bureau of Military Statistics, in which he gave a brief account of his prewar life. He was born June 26, 1822 in Portville, Cattaraugus County, New York. (At the time of his birth, and until 1837, Portville was part of the town of Olean.) He lived there "untill ten years of age," Warner noted. "Then remooved to Phelps, Ontario County where I resided untill 1845. Then remooved to Portville, Cattaraugus County, where I have since resided." In those few sentences, Warner concealed a childhood filled with hardship.

Deacon Jesse Warner was the ancestor who settled in New York State. He arrived from Connecticut in the late 1700s and purchased a large tract of land in Phelps. Jesse's grandson, Dennis Warner, was born there in 1799 and remained until he was eighteen, when he moved to Olean and found work clerking in a

store. In 1820 Dennis married Clarissa Andrews, and the young couple soon settled on the south bank of the Allegheny River, opposite present-day Westons Mills in the town of Portville. Clarissa bore three children (Lewis had an older sister and a younger brother), and Dennis purchased and ran a sawmill, rafting his lumber downriver to market at Pittsburgh. The lumber business was booming in those years along the oxbow of the Allegheny in Cattaraugus County.

In 1826 the family was struck by tragedy when Dennis Warner, after delivering a load of lumber, died in Pittsburgh. Widow Clarissa struggled desperately to provide for herself and three small children. That was the situation when Lewis left home in 1832, aged ten, and journeyed to his father's home town. In Phelps he was bound out as an apprentice to a tanner. The boy's years in the tannery were so hard that he regretted for the rest of his life that he didn't run away. He was rewarded when he was twenty-one with "a decent suit of clothes, his first pair of boots, and \$6 in cash."

In the autumn of 1845, Warner moved back to Portville—his home for the rest of his life. For several years he worked for a prominent Portville lumber dealer, Smith Parish, and made annual rafting trips downriver. Striking off on his own about 1854, Warner established a business as a carpenter and joiner, and continued to raft lumber on the Allegheny. Within a few years he met, courted, and married Mary M. Cossett, and began a family. Mary Cossett and Warner were wed on December 31, 1857 in her home town of Pompey in Onondaga County, New York. She had been born there on April 11, 1831 and was of French descent, her family having fled France during the 1789 Revolution.

The Warner's first two children were sons: Clarence L., born December 6, 1858, and Charles H., born January 24, 1862. Lewis Warner had achieved stability in his life and had earned the respect of his townsmen. He was honored with election to public office, as justice of the peace for four terms and as Portville's supervisor from 1858 to 1862. But that period of personal fulfillment in Warner's life was a time of worsening discord in the United States—discord that erupted into war.

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In the summer of 1862, when President Lincoln issued a call for 300,000 volunteers to serve for three years, Warner acted decisively. With Arthur Hotchkiss of Olean, he began to enroll local men for duty in a proposed Cattaraugus County regiment. Warner signed up 50 of the 98 recruits the two men enrolled. The volunteers came primarily from the towns of Portville, Hinsdale, Allegany, Olean and Ischua. They were among the first Cattaraugus County recruits to arrive at Camp Brown in Jamestown, Chautauqua County—the regimental rendezvous. There they were designated Company C of the new regiment, the 154th New York Volunteer Infantry. The men elected Warner captain and Hotchkiss first lieutenant, and the two were mustered into the United States service as such on September 26, 1862. The new captain was forty years old, five feet ten inches tall, with brown hair and blue eyes.

The 154th New York joined the Army of the Potomac in northern Virginia in early October. Soon after the regiment's arrival, Captain Warner penned a letter to a friend in Portville.

Well, here we are down in Dixie. Surrounded by all the panoply of war. Turn your eyes whichever way you will, the iron instruments of man's revenge upon man meet the eye, although not as conspicuously as the white tents (false emblems of purity and peace) of those who, like myself, have left the peaceful pursuits and associations of home, to mingle, if need be, in the deadly strife and shed the last drop of our blood in defense of our common country and its free and noble institutions.

Those lofty sentiments and brave vows would be put to the test, Warner knew. He noted the 154th had seen veteran troops in a review:

Many of the regiments we saw are reduced to from two to three hundred soldiers. Their regimental colors were torn and tattered in every imaginable form, and many a scarred face greeted our inquiring eyes as we marched along. How long ere the 154th Regiment will be reduced to the same condition? Of the 950 men who left Cattaraugus will not more than one in four be on hand to answer to their names when we are mustered out of the service,

and will I be among that number? These were the questions which came up for solution in my mind as we marched past these war stained veterans.

Upcoming battles were ominous, Warner knew, but he thought combat was preferable to other fates the soldiers faced. The first death from disease had occurred in the 154th's camp. The captain reflected,

This would seem to me the hardest of all, to leave wife and children to venture my life on the battlefield and then to die before we had a chance to meet the enemy would seem hard to bear. Far better for me to die amid the clash of steel against steel.

Battle was still in the future for the 154th, however, as they spent their first seven months either in camp or on inconsequential marches. During one such movement, Captain Warner expressed his impatience in a letter to the editor of the *Olean Times*.

That there may be no thought of winter quarters, and that the fast closing year may see the rebellion so far crushed that no hope of final success may remain in the breast of its most sanguine supporter should be the prayer of every true friend of our sorely tried country.

Early in April, 1863, Warner returned to his Portville home on a leave of absence. He was suffering from bronchitis, and after a short period of recuperation, he headed back south to rejoin the regiment. But on arriving at their camp, he found the 154th was off on a campaign. He wrote in his diary,

This much for going home. Regt gone. perhaps already engaged with the Rebels and I not with them to share in the dangers or honors of the occasion. Had I known this I should have staid in camp, much as I wished to see home, with all its endearment. But perhaps there has been no engagement and all will be well yet.

Captain Warner caught up with Company C and the 154th New York in time to take part in their first fight, and it was a disaster. It occurred on the evening of May 2, 1863 during the Battle of Chancellorsville. Almost half of the regiment was killed, wounded or captured as the 154th attempted to cover the retreat

of its corps against an overwhelming Confederate attack. In his diary, Warner praised the regiments forlorn stand. "Nobly did the 154 respond to the call of duty, and bravely did she sustain the credit of old Cattaraugus." But in his later years he admitted, "The most unfortunate thing about the 154th was that we had not learned to run when we ought to have done so."

The face of battle, Warner found, was an ugly one. The following day he noted in his diary,

Although we had no part in the fight of this day [May 3], our position on the road leading to the River enabled us to see its effects on all their Horrors. While the battle lasted there was a constant stream of wounded going past, on horseback, on litters, on stretchers, on foot supported by friends on each side and without any aid. The sights were enough to make one sick of war and its attendant Horrors.

After a disheartening defeat and retreat, the regiment returned to its old camp and faced another depressing scene.

The decomposing remains of dead horses and mules, the entrails of Slaughtered Cattle the Garbage which has accumulated around the outskirts of our camp would soon under the heat of the sun become a fruitfull source of disease and death.

Men began to die of typhoid fever, and the regiment's camp was moved.

Early in June the commander of the 154th New York, Colonel Patrick Henry Jones, was in Albany making unofficial recommendations for promotions in his regiment. (His suggestions were unofficial because he was a paroled prisoner, having been wounded and captured at Chancellorsville.) Jones wrote to the state adjutant general,

Captain L.D. Warner is by commission the ranking Captain of the Regt. and I know of no reason why any other officer should be selected for the Majority in preference to him. He is a faithful, brave and intelligent officer and well deserving of promotion.

Warner was mustered in as major of the 154th on June 30 near Emmitsburg, Maryland, a town close by the Pennsylvania

border. The regiment had reached that place after a series of hard, long marches, most of them in stifling heat and choking dust. Early the next morning, July 1, 1863, Major Warner received a lucky assignment. He was ordered to take fifty men of the 154th on a reconnaissance to Sabillasville, Maryland. Later that morning, the rest of the regiment marched off on the road to Pennsylvania, toward the town of Gettysburg. "Nothing of importance attended the march," Warner noted of his scouting mission. "On our return we found the corps had marched in the morning to Gettysburg where the 154th was engaged and the entire force except 15 men & 3 officers killed wounded or made prisoners."

Warner left his detachment and rode to Gettysburg, where he found the report to be true. As at Chancellorsville, the 154th New York had sacrificed itself covering a retreat of its corps. Fortunately for the regiment, Major Warner and his fifty men missed the battle and remained to augment its decimated ranks. He was in the saddle nearly all night, rushing back to Emmitsburg and hurrying the detachment to Gettysburg, where it joined the survivors of the 154th on the morning of July 2. The reunited command remained in its position for the remainder of the battle, under artillery fire but not actively engaged, and witnessed the great Union victory from its line on Cemetery Hill.

The pursuit of the defeated Confederate army was not as gruelling as the march to halt the invasion had been. But Warner voiced the general disappointment when the Confederates successfully retreated across the Potomac River back into Virginia. "It is evident the Rebs have given us the slip and have escaped across the River with all their baggage and plunder," he wrote in his diary on July 14. "So the campaign is not yet ended and we have yet to make long and weary marches before any great results can be attained. Well so mote it be, if that is to be the necessity."

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At the conclusion of the Gettysburg Campaign, the 154th New York went into camp and was put on duty accompanying recruits to the front. This period of the regiment's service was so

dull that Major Warner didn't bother to make entries in his diary. He assumed command of the 154th on July 24, when Lieutenant Colonel Dan B. Allen of Otto and a small detail from the regiment went north on detached duty. (Colonel Jones was still on parole; he had not yet been exchanged.) The monotony was broken abruptly for the 154th on September 26, 1863. Major Warner resumed his diary, and his entry for that day began, "Broke Camp at 5 A.M. marched to the Cars and Embarked for some where." The regiment was leaving Virginia and the Army of the Potomac, part of a two-corps force sent to the relief of the besieged Union army in Chattanooga, Tennessee. A week-long railroad trip landed the regiment in Bridgeport, Alabama.

Late in October the 154th New York was in the advance as the relief troops marched toward Chattanooga. The regiment's first fight under Major Warner took place on October 28. "After feeling our way along to within about 6 miles of town we came upon the advance posts of the Rebels," Warner wrote. "The 73 Pa and 154 NY were deployed as skirmishers and went in with line charging into a thick wood and up a high and steep Hill from whence the Rebs were soon driven and passage opened for the remainder of the Troops." This brush with the Confederates at Wauhatchie, Tennessee was merely a skirmish—only one man was wounded in the 154th—but it helped to open the famous Cracker Line and relieve the siege of Chattanooga. Both the commander and his regiment were well satisfied. "Our boys are in good spirits and quite jubilant over their afternoons performance," Warner noted in his diary. "This is the first time they have had a chance to make the Rebs run, and the way they made the woods ring with their cheers was really amusing."

The 154th New York had always been a proud regiment, but at times during its tenure with the Army of the Potomac morale had been low. At Chancellorsville and Gettysburg the regiment had fought bravely but lost heavily in hopeless last stands, fighting while others fled, and trying to stop the unstoppable. Finally, at Wauhatchie, it was their turn to chase a routed foe. Morale in the regiment reached new heights and remained excellent through most of their service in the western theater.

Colonel Jones was exchanged and commanded the 154th during its minimal involvement in the November battle at Chattanooga, in which the Confederates were soundly defeated. The 154th then took part in a hard march to the relief of Union forces in Knoxville, and an equally hard return to Chattanooga. On the December day they began their march back, Warner wrote, "Morning frosty and roads slippery. Our boys are in a very poor condition for the march many of them being almost entirely barefoot." At the close of that tough campaign, the regiment built a comfortable winter camp in Lookout Valley, near Chattanooga.

Warner's bronchitis flared up again that winter, and he was also troubled by dyspepsia. He obtained a certificate from the 154th's assistant surgeon, Corydon C. Rugg, and applied for a leave of absence. Colonel Jones added his endorsement to Warner's application: "This is a very capable and valuable officer—he has hitherto been present for duty with his Regiment in all its engagements and every tour of duty and I earnestly recommend that a short respite be given him to recruit his health." The leave was approved, and Warner left Lookout Valley for a month's stay in Portville. It was the second and last brief time he was separated from the regiment in three years of service.

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In the spring of 1864, the 154th New York, as part of General Sherman's army, embarked on the Atlanta Campaign. It proved to be unlike any other campaign the regiment participated in—almost constant marching and fighting. The regiment left its winter quarters with about 240 men. During the campaign it lost almost half of them. It was in that crucible of combat that the 154th got to know Major Warner as its commander.

When the regiment left Lookout Valley, he was third in command, behind Colonel Jones and Lieutenant Colonel Allen. Four days later, on Sunday, May 8, 1864, the 154th fought its first battle of the campaign. The division of which the regiment formed a part was ordered to assault Dug Gap, a road-crossing on

the crest of Rocky Face Ridge, in northern Georgia. Warner described the fight in a letter to A.E. Fay, who printed it in the newspaper he published, the *Olean Times*.

Our brigade was formed in line of battle, with skirmishers in front, and were ordered to advance and storm the hill. The face of the hill is very steep and covered with loose rolling stones, none of them large enough to afford shelter to the men who toiled up its rugged sides. Along the crest runs a ledge of rocks with a perpendicular face of from five to ten feet, affording a most excellent shelter to the enemy, who, without exposing themselves, could deliberately fire upon our men as they ascended from the vale beneath. After resting for a few moments, the order to advance was given, and under a galling and deathly fire from the crest, our brave boys advanced (many of them never to return) to the charge, cheering lustily as they climbed the almost perpendicular ascent. As they neared the summit, the fire from above became more fatal. . . . The 154th, although losing men every moment, advanced steadily to the foot of the glacis, where they were partially protected from the fire of the foe, and halted for a moment to rest ere they made the desperate attempt to mount the summit. . . . At length Col. Jones gave the command to rise up and forward, and what were left of 200 men mounted the ramparts, and our colors were planted on the mountain's crest!

It was a legendary moment in the history of the 154th New York—their flags waving on a Georgia mountaintop, the soldiers scrambling to the crest—but it was soon over. Colonel Jones was thrown from the palisade and severely injured, the color-bearer was killed (several others were shot before the flags were rescued), other men were killed or wounded, some others captured, and the assault was beaten back down the mountainside. Although the Battle of Rocky Face Ridge was a defeat, it was a source of great pride to the members of the 154th. As Major Warner wrote, "Our boys are in good spirits. . . . We have now 140 guns, hardly enough to be called a regiment, but as good for our numbers as any in the army."

A week later, Lieutenant Colonel Allen led the regiment in its next battle, at Resaca. The following day, May 16, Allen, having taken sick, left for the rear and Warner took command of

the 154th. Sherman's army continued its southward drive, seldom straying far from its lifeline, the railroad. On May 25 the 154th was engaged at Pumpkin Vine Creek, and for the next six days they skirmished with the enemy near New Hope Church. Warner compared the situation of the opposing armies to two cats,

yawling and spitting at each other, going through with all the formula of a fight, except the pitching into each other, and actually making the fur fly. . . . Our men have been for six days constantly under fire, and the want of sleep is telling upon their health. Their spirits are, however, good, and they are ready for what may occur.

Colonel Jones, having recovered from his Rocky Face Ridge injury, returned and took command of the brigade (being the senior officer), leaving Major Warner in charge of the 154th New York. The regiment spearheaded a charge of the brigade at Lost Mountain on June 15, and once again Warner had the satisfaction of reporting that the 154th had broken the enemy's line and chased the Confederates about a mile to a stronger position. There the 154th remained under fire the following day. The regiment's casualties for the two days were twenty-six killed and wounded, proportionally high losses. Major Warner was struck a glancing blow by a spent bullet—it was deflected by his leather belt. It caused a "severe, sickening, stinging sensation," as he put it years later, but he didn't report it or seek treatment. The next day, the Rebels having retreated, he was ready once again to "go hunt out the enemy among these endless Georgia hills and forests."

The 154th spent the next four days on a flanking movement. Warner wrote to Fay on June 21,

This campaign has been a trying one to the physical powers of the men. We have now had seven weeks of constant marching, digging, bushwhacking and some fair fighting, with an accompaniment of heat, dust, rain and mud, especially the two last. . . . Our progress, though sure, is slow, and it may be many weeks ere the spires of Atlanta will glisten before our eager gaze. But be the

time long or short, we are bound to win in the end. Our boys are in the best of spirits and sanguine of success.

On July 1 Warner reported more of the same.

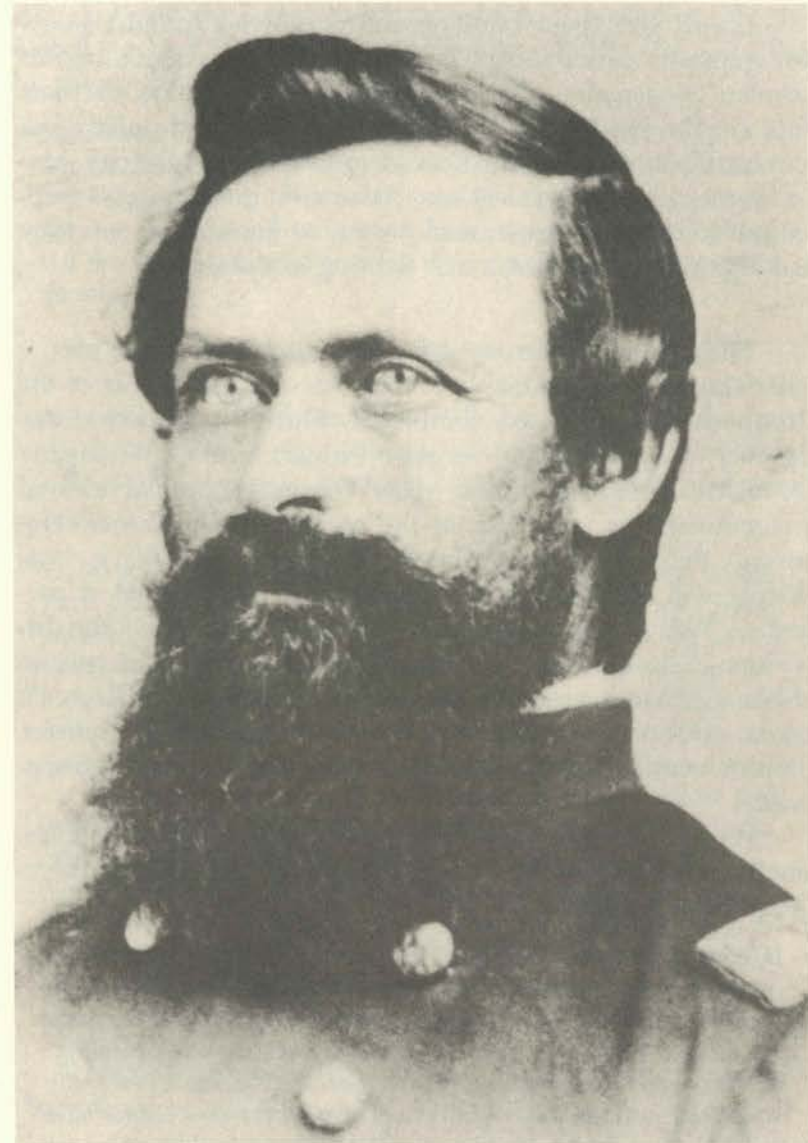
Eight weeks of hard and rough campaigning, and still we find ourselves enclosed within the limits of this seemingly endless forest. . . Our losses since my last have been one man killed and seven wounded. . . I think there is no regiment in the corps (I know none in the division) that has been in the front line more than ours, or that has acquitted itself better. Our boys, notwithstanding their severe losses, are in the best of spirits, and enjoy the excitements of the picket line as well as ever they did squirrel shooting at home.

In his next letter to Fay, written July 8, Warner contrasted an Independence Day celebration in the North—"with its usual attendants, such as patriotic speeches, big dinners, rides, balls, powder burnings, &c., to say nothing of the amount of good, middling and bad liquor expended on the glorious occasion"—with the lot of the men of the 154th:

Sweltering under the heat of a Georgia July sun, and daily, as well as nightly engaged in fighting, watching, digging and marching, toiling over rugged hills, through deep and tangled ravines, and almost impenetrable jungles, charging up to the cannon's mouth, or the deadly rifle-pit, meeting wounds or even death without flinching. . .

For all the hardships and dangers they had endured, their goal was at last in sight, and Major Warner declared, "Yes, my eyes have beheld the gates of the city." From their camp on a ridge, the men of the 154th could see the sunlight glinting on the distant buildings of Atlanta.

Lieutenant Colonel Allen had returned to the regiment on July 7 and relieved Warner of the command. However, Allen had not completely recovered from his ailments. During the Battle of Peach Tree Creek, on July 20, Warner had to relieve him of command while the fighting raged. Dan Allen was soon hospitalized, and received his discharge at the end of September. Warner retained command of the 154th for the duration of the war.



Colonel Warner sent this wartime portrait to the Bureau of Military Statistics in Albany. (NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS)

August was spent building and occupying entrenchments that crept ever closer to Atlanta, and the men were subjected to harmless cannonading that soon was considered part of the routine. For the 154th New York, the campaign ended quietly but very satisfactorily when the Confederates evacuated the city. Major Warner led the regiment into Atlanta on the evening of September 2. He and the men had no way of knowing it, but they had seen the last of their major fighting in the war.

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The Union occupation of Atlanta was, for the most part, a quiet time for the 154th New York—a welcome rest after the strenuous campaign just completed. During that period one member of the regiment, Sergeant Horace Smith of Company D, voiced a complaint against Major Warner. Smith had received a commission as an officer in the regiment, but Warner temporarily delayed his muster-in. Smith griped in his diary, “Maj Warner will not make a transfer so I can be mustered at present. . . Well it dont make much difference. only shows the disposition of the old mule. . . perhaps he will some day be only an old lumberman instead of Maj. commanding the 154th Regt. I’ll ask no odds of him then.” But Warner soon made the transfer, Smith was mustered in as first lieutenant, and his chagrin disappeared.

Warner took care of his men, and he also showed compassion for the animals the army depended on. He once noted regretfully in his diary,

If there is any animal subjected to mans control that is to be pittied it is the poor mules attached to the Army Trains. They are damed beaten and abused without restraint and without remorse, the drivers seem to vie with each other in swearing and pounding, and between the heavily loaded waggons, the miserable roads, the scant feed, and the worst of all cruell drivers, the poor brutes have indeed a hard time and will no doubt rejoice when the war is over and they can return once more to the quiet pursuits of peaceful life.

But there was one class of beings for whom Major Warner

had no sympathy—the leadership of the Confederacy. He deplored the destruction and desolation brought by the war. “But for these,” he declared,

the responsibility rests upon those who are responsible for the commencement and continuance of the war, with all its attendant horrors and evils. . . When will the deluded people of the South see and appreciate the enormous train of evil and suffering that the few thousand aristocrats in their midst are bringing upon them?

A mighty train of suffering was indeed loosed on the South—by Sherman’s army, in its March to the Sea and the Campaign of the Carolinas. The 154th New York played its part in the destruction of the marches, wrecking railroads and foraging from the countryside. Major Warner described the latter activity:

While corn is the principal article of forage, nothing that can be eaten either by man or beast comes amiss or is rejected. Sweet potatoes and yams are an important item. Then comes cattle, sheep, hogs, geese, chickens, honey, and in fact everything that the country produces, is taken, and turned to the use of the soldier or his animals. So clean is the work done that I much doubt whether a forlorn hope of catterpillars can winter where our Army has foraged. . . I have witnessed what I would fein believe had never occurred. I have seen families of helpless women & children completely striped of everything. . . the last cow, pig, chicken, ear of corn, even the last pint of meal or corn cake, if perchance it was baked, the last platter, bowl, teacup, knife or fork, not even sparing the tea kettle. . . while the family sits in dumb apathy, surveying the ruin, or are pleading (too often in vain) that a little may be spared them. . .

This ruthlessness was justified, the Union soldiers thought. Major Warner stated the case.

It must be borne in mind that no wars, and especially of the nature of this, was ever carried on without abuses and wrongs, or without misery being brought upon the innocent as well as the guilty. . . And was there ever a war in which the chief suffering

did not fall to the lot of the poor, those who are but indirectly responsible therefor?

And so Sherman's army swept from Atlanta to Savannah like a Biblical plague, and an entry in Warner's diary read, "our course is marked by a line of fire."

The 154th spent Christmas in Savannah, and on New Year's Eve Major Warner wrote in his diary, "Thus closes 1864. Young 1865 comes upon the stage to-morrow. May it witness the end of this unnatural strife, and its end find us all at home enjoying the blessings of peace!"

On January 19, 1865, Warner was mustered in as lieutenant colonel of the 154th. Shortly thereafter, he led the regiment northward from its Savannah camp. The march through South Carolina was even more brutal than the March to the Sea. "Nearly all the buildings on our line of march have been burned," Colonel Warner recorded in his diary, "only the tall chimney-stacks are left." When the 154th crossed the state line into North Carolina, he expressed the wish that the destruction would lessen, noting considerable Unionist sentiment in that state. "We have left the other State behind, and also our mark, which it will take years to obliterate. Sherman will long be remembered, as was Attila, as the 'Scourge of God' to Carolina."

On March 24, 1865, Warner was commissioned colonel of the 154th New York. That day the regiment was on the move to Kinston, North Carolina. A dozen of its foragers were captured by the enemy near Snow Hill—the 154th's last casualties of the war. Warner never received the chance to be mustered in as colonel, however, because a whirlwind of events in the next month ended the war: Lee's surrender to Grant in Virginia, the assassination of President Lincoln, and the Confederate surrender to Sherman in North Carolina. Colonel Warner led the 154th on a gruelling, three hundred mile march to Washington, and then on a triumphant parade through the capital's streets in the Grand Review of the victorious Union armies. It was a wonderful and proud moment. At the head of the regiment, Colonel Warner rode through avenues packed with spectators, who roared with

cheers and thundered applause, and garlanded the soldiers with flowers.

Everything after the Grand Review was anticlimactic. The 154th pitched its final camp near Bladensburg, Maryland and Warner drudged at paperwork. On June 11, 1865, he and his regiment were mustered out of the United States service. They took the railroad to Elmira and there, on June 22, Colonel Warner told the 154th New York goodbye. The next day they caught westbound trains for home.

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Lewis D. Warner quietly resumed civilian life on his return to Portville. Mary Cossett Warner welcomed her husband home with relief. Like other soldiers' wives, she had found the war to be a trying time economically as well as emotionally. Her family would remember that food was occasionally in short supply during the war, but she managed to obtain necessities on credit from local merchants.

The Warner family grew in the postwar years with the addition of two more children: Ralph C., born March 14, 1866, and Bertha A., born May 8, 1868—the fourth anniversary of the Battle of Rocky Face Ridge. Warner continued his work as a carpenter and joiner, except for six years when he was a clerk in the office of Weston, Mersereau & Co., a large Portville lumber and shingle mill. He was also active in his town's civic and fraternal organizations: a charter member of the Portville Library Association, trustee of the Portville Union Free School, inspector of elections for fifteen years, and master of the Masonic lodge. Running on the Republican ticket, Warner was again elected to town offices, serving two postwar terms as justice of the peace and six years as Portville's supervisor.

As postwar daily life accumulated into years, remembrance of the war remained strong among the veterans, and they increasingly harkened back to the days of 1861 to 1865. Lewis D. Warner's very identity had been altered by the war—he was ever after referred to as "Colonel Warner." A biographical sketch published during his lifetime declared,

Colonel Warner is modest and extremely unassuming, a true patriot devoted to his country, is one of Portville's most honored citizens, and a leading representative war hero of Cattaraugus County. . . He was always ready and present to lead his command, never flinched from any duty, and a truer, braver soldier never drew a sword, and it is the unanimous testimony of his comrades that he never knew fear.

In 1879 Portville veterans formed a local branch of the great Union veterans' society, the Grand Army of the Republic. H. W. Wessel Post, No. 85, was the oldest continuous G.A.R. post in Cattaraugus County. Colonel Warner held several positions in the post over the years, including that of commander. When a Sons of Veterans group was organized in Portville and affiliated with Post 85, it was named "L.D. Warner Camp, No. 23" in his honor.

When New York State dedicated its monument in the National Cemetery in Gettysburg, on the thirtieth anniversary of the battle in July, 1893, Colonel Warner led the veterans of his old army division as marshal in the parade to the ceremony. Two months later, H. W. Wessel Post prepared a surprise for him. At a reception in Portville on the evening of September 27, the post presented Colonel Warner with a gold-headed cane. The veteran making the presentation commented, "This gift is not intended as an ornament, but rather as the staff of your declining years; and when you, in a good old age, shall lean upon it for support you will think of those years from '62 to '65 when you gave to your country and the old flag your support."

The following year Colonel Warner grasped the cane as he posed for a photograph with other veterans of the 154th New York at the National Encampment of the G.A.R. in Pittsburgh. A Cattaraugus County newspaper later noted, "The picture will be a valued memento in the families of all these veterans." No doubt Colonel Warner steadied himself with his cane in 1897, when he and over 150 veterans of the 154th New York formed part of the long blue line of old soldiers marching in the great parade at the G.A.R.'s National Encampment in Buffalo. It was the last time the commander and survivors of the old regiment marched together.

Colonel Warner died on November 18, 1898, of heart disease. Echoes of the Civil War accompanied him to his grave. On November 20, the H. W. Wessel Post attended the funeral in a body, and provided the pall bearers to carry him to rest in Portville's Chestnut Hill Cemetery. At a memorial service that evening in the Presbyterian church, the members of Portville's and Olean's G.A.R. posts swelled the attendance and filled the church. A comrade of Wessel Post delivered a brief eulogy recounting Colonel Warner's military record and G.A.R. service. A family friend read portions of letters his parents had received from the colonel during the war. Veterans of the 154th New York, hearing the passages, let recollection sweep them back to the days when they followed Colonel Warner in Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia and the Carolinas. Soon, they knew, they would follow him again.



Colonel Warner and veterans of the 154th New York at the National Encampment of the G.A.R., Pittsburgh, Pa., September 13, 1894. STANDING, LEFT TO RIGHT: William Witherell (private, Co. C), Daniel Wright (corporal, Co. C), Charles Whitney (private, Co. I), Jacob Shafer (private, Co. C), John Bush (sergeant, Co. D). SEATED, LEFT TO RIGHT: C. Harry Matteson (hospital steward), Charles McKay (sergeant, Co. C), Colonel Warner, Stephen Welch (first lieutenant, Co. C), Orlando White (private, Co. K). Colonel Warner holds the gold-headed cane presented to him by Portville's H.W. Wessel Post, No. 85. (CATTARAUGUS COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM)

Colonel Warner's Farewell Address to the 154th New York

FELLOW SOLDIERS:

THE time to which we have long looked forward with pleasing anticipation having at length arrived;—the task which we set ourselves to accomplish having been done, and well done;—our presence in the field (to sustain and defend the best of Earthly Governments against the most uncalled for and infernal conspiracy for its overthrow, that ever emanated from the grand council of the Arch Fiend himself,) being no longer required; the cause which led us to leave our farms, workshops, counting-houses and studies, buckle on our armor and march forth to fight (and if needs be, die) for freedom and free institutions having ceased to exist, we are now about to return to our homes, and to exchange the implements and habiliments of war for those more congenial to our tastes and education.

Yes, Fellow Soldiers, the war is over—the Rebellion crushed. The Olive Branch of Peace now waves over our entire land, mingling its *green* with the *red*, *white* and *blue* of our National Banner, whose stars shine with an additional lustre, since the fiery ordeal through which it has so lately and so triumphantly passed.

Under these pleasing auspices it is but mete that, ere we separate, ere this organization dissolve into the constituent element of which it is composed, I should say a few words with regard to the time in which we have been so closely connected, as members of the 154th.

This Regiment is composed of men who, when our Country in its hours of peril called for help, nobly came forward in its defence without hope of other reward than a consciousness of having done their duty.—You left your homes actuated only by motives of patriotism; desiring no richer recompense than to see peace once more restored, and the monster Rebellion lie crushed and lifeless at your feet, and then to hear the plaudit, “Well done, brave and faithful ones,” from a grateful Nation.

Actuated by such motives, you could not be else than Soldiers, *brave noble and true*. And that you have proved yourselves all these, the history of Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Lookout Valley, Chattanooga, Rocky Face Ridge, Resaca, Dallas, Pine Knob, Kenasaw, Peach Tree Creek, Atlanta, Savannah, and the campaign of the Carolinas has fully proved. Fellow Soldiers the 154th needs no eulogist to portray its deeds; they are inscribed in enduring characters upon the annals of the past three years:—and there, while our Nation exists, they will remain, and will be held in remembrance by a grateful people.—What a bright and glorious galaxy glitters upon its historic page. Standing here, as I now do, with your achievements fresh in my memory, I would not exchange my three years’ connection with this little band for all the rest of my life together; for I feel that, in after years, I can look upon these as of more value than them all.

These depleted ranks, too, tell their own tale of battles, marches, exposures, privations, hardships, and all that tends to exhaust the physical powers, and shorten the life of man. Entering the field near a thousand strong, we return with little more than one-third that number. And where are the balance? They have fallen on the battle-field; have died of wounds received there, or of diseases engendered by the exposures and privations of a soldier’s life; they have starved and rotted in *Southern Prisons*; have been sent to their homes maimed or broken down by wounds or disease, or have been transferred to an organization where they could yet serve, and be cared for by the Government. While we rejoice in the prospect of our own speedy restoration to our homes, let us not forget those who have thus fallen by the

way, or neglect to sympathize with their bereaved ones, around the desolate hearth.

This much for the past. The present is made up of pleasing anticipations of the future. There is pleasure in the thought of being freed from the restraints of Military laws and discipline; which, however easy and light, is always irksome to those who are like our Citizen Soldiers, all Sovereigns, and every one of whom is in his own estimation, fully competent at all times and upon all occasions, to judge the propriety or necessity of any thing he is required to do. I say this is irksome; but while the war continued, your intelligence and good sense told you that implicit obedience to orders was essential to military success. Now, however, the yoke presses more severely, and there is a great and growing impatience to throw it off.

There is pleasure in the thought of meeting loved ones who are anxiously watching for your coming,—Father, Mother, Sister, Brother, Wife, Children, Sweet-heart, Friends, all. There are none here but feel their heart-strings thrill with pleasure at the thought of greeting one or more of these, and of realizing the warm and affectionate welcome in store for you. Yes! your reception will be a pleasant one, and you will feel more than repaid for your past years of dangers and privations.

There is pleasure in the thought of the esteem in which you will be held by all whose esteem is worth the possession;—and in the proud consciousness of having done your duty as a citizen of this favored land. I do not believe there is one now within the sound of my voice who regrets that he became a *Soldier Boy*; or who would not, were our Country again in danger,—were the war-cry again to resound from the hill-tops and along the valleys of old Cattaraugus and Chautauqua— buckle on, as before, his armor, and rally ‘round the Old Flag, shouting the battle-cry of Freedom.

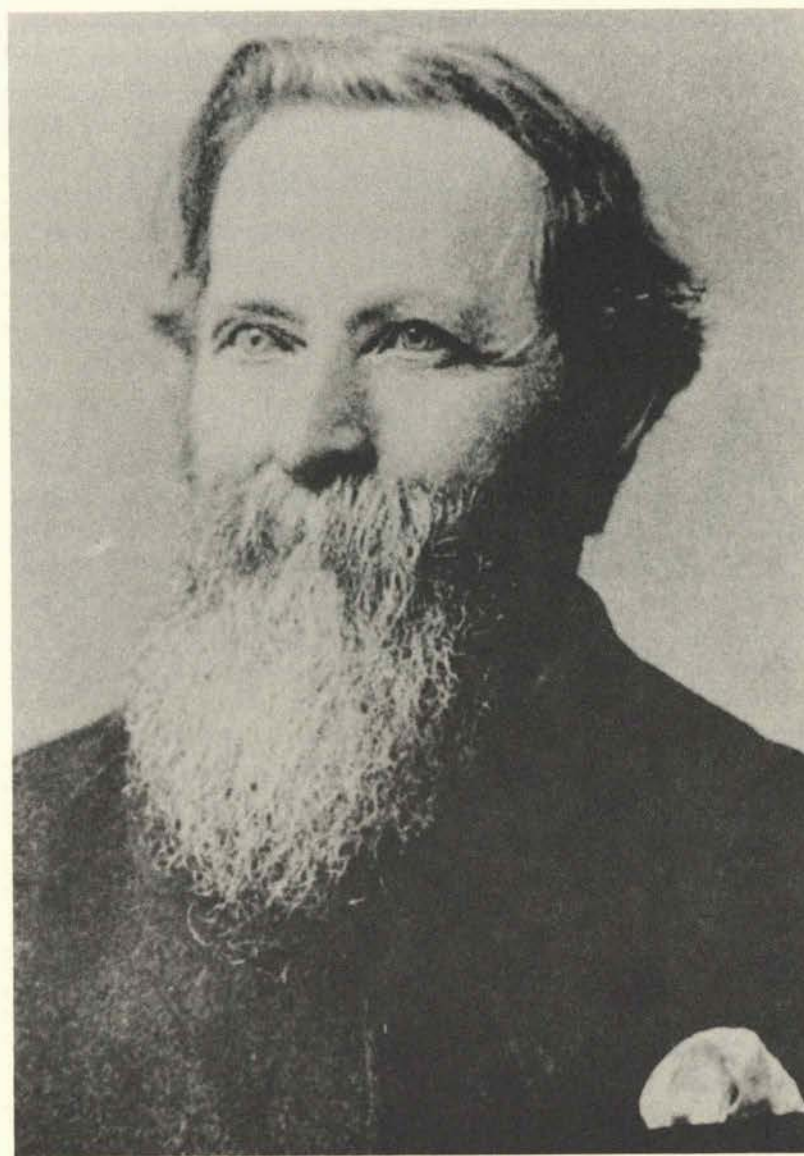
You and I are about to part. Our official connection, and my authority over you, about to cease. And I cannot let you go without expressing my thanks and acknowledgements for the ready obedience to order, and general good behaviour of you all,

as well as for the many marks of personal respect which I have received at your hands. The memory of these will ever be a green oasis in the rugged journey of life. Coming among you simply as commander of a Company, it has been my fortune, through the resignations and promotions of those above me, to find my authority extended over the entire Command, for a good portion of the time we have been together. How well, or ill, I have acquitted myself, is not for me to judge; but one thing I can say, I have ever endeavored to do my duty, and have been governed by what appeared to me to be the best interests of the Regiment and the service. I part from you with good will, and my best wishes attend you all, and I can only hope that these sentiments are reciprocal. As you have been good Soldiers, so, I trust, that from the moment you receive your discharge, you will become good, law-abiding, peace-loving Citizens. May no act of yours, either individually or collectively, sully the reputation of the Regiment, which is now equalled by few, and excelled by none. May the moral effect of the association of the past years cause no thrill of sorrow to convulse the frame of those loved ones, whose daily prayer has been, that if your life was spared you might return to your homes as pure as when you went from their Angel care and influence.

That your reception at your several homes may be all that the heart can wish, that your repose beneath the laurels you have so nobly won may be long, and that happiness and prosperity may ever attend you, is the sincere wish of your late Commander,

L. D. Warner,
Lieutenant-Colonel.

*Head-Quarters 154th N.Y.S.V.,
Elmira, June 22d, 1865.*



Colonel Warner in his later years—"a leading representative war hero of Cattaraugus County." (HISTORICAL GAZETTEER AND BIOGRAPHICAL MEMORIAL OF CATTARAUGUS COUNTY)

Sources and Acknowledgements

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Clippings of Warner's letters to the *Olean Times* were found in the Cattaraugus County Historical Museum in Little Valley. (One of those letters was republished in the *Fredonia Censor*.) Two of Warner's letters to Nelson P. Wheeler of Portville were published in *Pine Knots and Bark Peelers: The Story of Five Generations of American Lumbermen*, by Reginald Wheeler (1960). Warner's farewell address to the 154th New York was published in the *Olean Times*. His reports of the regiment's campaigns were culled from *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (1880-1901).

Copies of Warner's military and pension records were obtained from the National Archives. Horace Smith's diary is at the Mazomanie (Wisconsin) Historical Society, and Alfred Benson's

papers are at the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka. Other published sources included the *Historical Gazetteer and Biographical Memorial of Cattaraugus County, New York*, edited by William Adams (1893), and *A History of the Town of Portville 1805-1920*, edited by Thomas and Ronda Shaner Pollock (1986). Background on the 154th New York came from *The Hardtack Regiment: An Illustrated History of the 154th Regiment, New York State Infantry Volunteers*, by Mark H. Dunkelman and Michael J. Winey (1981). Information was also found in the *Ellicottville Post*, *Cattaraugus Republican* and *Olean Morning Times*. Along with the 1863 diary, Mr. Spencer provided me with Warner's completed questionnaire from the Bureau of Military Statistics, and other information about his family. I must thank Jack Spencer not only for the materials he furnished, but also for his encouraging support of this project, and for reading Colonel Warner's farewell address at our 5th Annual Reunion of Descendants of the 154th New York. And to Mrs. Ronda Pollock and the Portville Historical and Preservation Society, my deepest gratitude for sponsoring our reunion, Col. L.D. Warner Day, and for the publication of this tribute.

Mark H. Dunkelman
Providence, RI

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